

We claim:

1. A method of detecting nucleic acid polymerase activity, the method comprising:
 - a) providing a primer-template hybrid duplex comprising a nucleic acid template and a nucleic acid primer, wherein the template, the primer, or both the template and the primer comprise a label;
 - b) contacting the duplex with a nucleic acid polymerase;
 - c) subjecting the hybrid duplex to denaturing conditions; and
 - d) detecting a signal from the label, wherein a change in the signal compared to a control is indicative of nucleic acid polymerase activity.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid template comprises a first label and the template comprises a second label.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the first label is a fluorescence donor and the second label is a FRET acceptor or fluorescence quencher.
4. The method of claim 2, wherein the first label is a FRET acceptor or fluorescence quencher and the second label is a fluorescence donor.
5. The method of claim 1, wherein nucleic acid template is immobilized close to a scintillant molecule and the primer is labeled with a radioisotope.
6. The method of claim 1, wherein is primer is immobilized close to a scintillant molecule and the nucleic acid template is labeled with a radioisotope.
7. The method of claim 1 wherein the nucleic acid polymerase is a DNA polymerase.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein the DNA polymerase is a bacterial DnaE.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein the DNA polymerase is *E. coli* DnaE or *H. influenzae* DnaE.
10. The method of claims 3 or 4 wherein the fluorescence donor is 5- or 6-carboxyfluorescein (FAM) and the FRET acceptor is 5- or 6-carboxytetramethylrhodamine (TAMRA).
11. The method of claim 1 wherein the denaturing conditions are achieved by application of heat.
12. The method of claim 1 wherein the denaturing conditions are achieved by addition of a chaotropic agent.
13. The method of claim 12 wherein the chaotropic agent is urea.
14. The method of claim 1 wherein the first label is borne at the 5' end of the primer and the second label is borne at the 3' end of the template.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein the primer is at least 6 nucleotides in length and the template is at least 10 nucleotides in length.

16. A method of screening for compounds that modulate nucleic acid polymerase activity, the method comprising:

- a) providing a primer-template hybrid duplex comprising a nucleic acid template and a nucleic acid primer, wherein either the template or the primer is labeled, or both the template and the primer are labeled;
- b) contacting the duplex with a nucleic acid polymerase and a compound;
- c) subjecting the hybrid duplex to denaturing conditions; and
- e) detecting a signal from the label, wherein a change in the signal compared to a control is indicative that the compound modulates nucleic acid polymerase activity.